

294A *HAK, Swomsoft - LL*

CANCEL 10-11

URGENT

1ST LD 288A

BY EDWARD K. DELONG

CAMP LEJEUNE, N. C. (UPI) -- THE UNITED STATES ANNOUNCED THURSDAY IT IS SENDING A SECOND HELICOPTER CARRIER TO THE MEDITERRANEAN, DOUBLING THE SIZE OF THE U. S. MARINE FORCE ATTACHED TO THE SIXTH FLEET.

THE CARRIER IWO JIMA, WITH APPROXIMATELY 2,000 MEN FROM THE 3RD BATTALION OF THE 6TH MARINE REGIMENT, WILL DEPART FOR THE MEDITERRANEAN "WITHIN THE NEXT FEW DAYS," A MARINE SPOKESMAN AT CAMP LEJEUNE SAID.

THE IWO JIMA ORIGINALLY HAD BEEN SCHEDULED TO GO TO THE MEDITERRANEAN IN NOVEMBER.

THE MARINES CANCELLED A MAJOR AMPHIBIOUS LANDING EXERCISE INVOLVING THE IWO JIMA 16 HOURS BEFORE IT WAS TO BEGIN IN ORDER TO PREPARE THE BIG SHIP FOR ITS DEPLOYMENT TO THE WARTORN MIDDLE EAST. THE EXERCISE HAD BEEN PLANNED AS THE 3RD BATTALION'S FINAL SHAKEDOWN BEFORE A ROUTINE SIX-MONTH MEDITERRANEAN CRUISE.

OFFICIALS REFUSED TO COMMENT ON WHY THE IWO JIMA WAS BEING SENT AHEAD OF SCHEDULE AND WHETHER GUADALCANAL, THE HELICOPTER CARRIER NOW IN THE MEDITERRANEAN WITH THE 2ND BATTALION OF THE 6TH MARINES ABOARD, WOULD REMAIN AFTER THE IWO JIMA ARRIVED.

MORE

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1ST ADD 1ST LD CANCEL CAMP LEJFUNE 294A XX ARRIVED.

INFORMED SOURCES, HOWEVER, SAID BOTH HELICOPTER CARRIERS PROBABLY WOULD BE STATIONED IN THE MEDITERRANEAN FOR THE TIME BEING IN CASE THE NEED AROSE TO RESCUE AMERICAN CIVILIANS IN ANY OF THE COUNTRIES CAUGHT UP IN THE WAR.

THE EXERCISE IN WHICH THE IWO JIMA HAD BEEN SCHEDULED TO TAKE PART CALLED FOR AN AMPHIBIOUS LANDING TO RESCUE CIVILIANS AND EMBASSY PERSONNEL IN THE MYTHICAL COUNTRY OF SLOUGHLAND, THEORETICALLY A MEDITERRANEAN COUNTRY BUT ACTUALLY A COLLECTION OF CINDER BLOCK BUILDINGS AT THIS NORTH CAROLINA BASE.

ANNOUNCEMENT THAT THE IWO JIMA WOULD GO TO THE MEDITERRANEAN WAS UNUSUAL, BECAUSE U. S. NAVY SHIP MOVEMENTS NORMALLY ARE NOT ANNOUNCED IN ADVANCE. BUT TWO NEWSMEN WERE AT CAMP LEJFUNE TO OBSERVE THE IWO JIMA'S TROOPS IN THEIR EXERCISE WHEN IT WAS CANCELLED.

"THE EXERCISE INVOLVING THE U.S.S. IWO JIMA WAS CANCELLED SO THE SHIP COULD COMPLETE DEPLOYMENT PREPARATIONS IN ORDER THAT SHE MAY DEPART FOR THE MEDITERRANEAN WITHIN THE NEXT FEW DAYS TO JOIN THE 6TH FLEET," THE ANNOUNCEMENT SAID.

"WE HAVE NO FURTHER COMMENT AT THIS TIME."

SOURCES SAID THE IWO JIMA WAS ORDERED TO PROCEED IMMEDIATELY TO ITS HOME PORT OF NORFOLK, VA., TO LOAD SUPPLIES FOR ITS VOYAGE.

INCLUDES PREVIOUS

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